

SELF CARE

Drug Interactions: What Should You Know

There are more opportunities today than ever before to learn about your health and to take better care of yourself. It is also more important than ever to know about the medicines you take. If you take several different medicines, see more than one doctor or have certain health conditions, you and your doctors need to be aware of all the medicines you take to avoid potential problems, such as drug interactions.

Drug interactions may make your drug less effective, cause unexpected side effects or increase the action of a particular drug. Some drug interactions can even be harmful to you. Reading the label every time you use a nonprescription or prescription drug and taking the time to learn about drug interactions may be critical to your health. You can reduce the risk of potentially harmful drug interactions and side effects with a little bit of knowledge and common sense.

Categories of Drug Interactions

1. **Drug-drug interactions** occur when two or more drugs react with each other. This drug-drug interaction may cause you to experience an unexpected side effect.
2. **Drug-food/beverage interactions** result from drugs reacting with foods or beverages.
3. **Drug-condition interactions** may occur when an existing medical condition makes certain drugs potentially harmful.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the drugs you take. When your doctor prescribes a new drug, discuss all Over the Counter (OTC) and prescription drugs, dietary supplements, vitamins, botanicals, minerals and herbals you take, as well as the foods you eat. Ask your pharmacist for the package insert for each prescription drug you take. The package insert provides more information about potential drug interactions.

Before taking a drug, ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions:

- Can I take it with other drugs?
- Should I avoid certain foods, beverages or other products?
- What are possible drug interaction signs I should know about?
- How will the drug work in my body?
- Is there more information available about the drug or my condition (on the Internet or in health and medical literature)?

Know how to take drugs safely and responsibly. Remember, the drug label will tell you:

- What the drug is used for
- How to take the drug
- How to reduce the risk of drug interactions and unwanted side effects

If you still have questions after reading the drug product label, ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

